

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 L-03 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

DRC-01 /066 W

----- 104885

R 261421Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1578

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

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CASA FOR RCAA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, NI

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FMG NEGOTIATIONS WITH ZAIRE ON AIR TRAFFIC ROUTES

REF: LAGOS 8227

1. OCTOBER 12 AND 13 ISSUES OF DAILY TIMES CARRIES STORIES ON MOST RECENT REOUND OF NIGERIA'S BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ZAIRE ON AIR TRAFFIC ROUTES BETWEEN LAGOS AND KINSHASA. ACCORDING TO TIMES, COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORT R.A.B. DIKKO LEFT FOR KINSHASA ON OCTOBER 10 PROMISING IMMINENT AGREEMENT, AND RETURNED EMPTYHANDED LESS THAN 48 HOURS LATER. DIKKO REPORTEDLY FAILED EVEN TO SECURE APPOINTMENT WITH HIS ZAIRIAN COUNTERPART, REASON GIVEN BEING THAT LATTER WAS "OUT OF TOWN".

2. COMMENT: FMG SEEKING LAGOS/KINSHASA ROUTE FOR NIGERIA AIRWAYS TO BALANCE AGAINST AIR ZAIRE'S LONG-STANDING UNILATERAL PRIVILEGES ON SAME ROUTE. AFTER FAILURE OF INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS SOME MONTHS ATO, AIR ZAIRE'S LANDING RIGHTS IN LAGOS WERE SUSPENDED AND HAVE NOT BEEN RESUMED TO DATE.

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ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCE, PROBLEM APPEARS TO BE THAT

NIGERIA AIRWAYS WANTS TO TAKE OVER AIR ZAIRE'S ROUND-TRIP FRIDAY FLIGHTS, AND LATTER SO FAR RELUCTANT TO SHIFT TO ANOTHER DAY OF THE WEEK.

3. LOCAL PANAM REP REPORTS THAT FMG APPROACHED PANAM SOMETIME AFTER INITIAL ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROPOSAL THAT PANAM ELIMINATE ITS ROUND-TRIP LAGOS/KINSHASA FLIGHTS. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, IDEA WAS TO USE THREAT OF ELIMINATION OF PANAM'S SERVICE "AS A LEVER" TO BRING AIR ZAIRE TO TERMS, AND MAKE NIGERIA AIRWAYS OFFER MORE ATTRACTIVE. (ELIMINATION OF THIS PANAM ROUTE, WERE IT TO COME ABOUT, WOULD ALSO SOLVE STICKY PROBLEM FOR FMG POSED BY PANAM'S ONWARD FLIGHTS KINSHASA TO JOHANNESBURG (REFTEL)). PANAM HAS THUS FAR SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED PROPOSAL, AND LOCAL REP DOES NOT SEE IMMEDIATE DANGER OF ITS BEING PRESSED FURTHER.

4. WE MAY EXPECT TO SEE CONTINUED EFFORTS BY FMG TO OBTAIN BILATERAL AIR TRAFFIC AGREEMENTS WITH COUNTRIES PRESENTLY GRANTED UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS IN NIGERIA. UNILATERAL RIGHTS TO FOREIGN AIRLINES HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED BY SOME FMG OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS OF PRESS AS SOURCE OF UNFAIR COMPETITION TO NIGERIA AIRWAYS. MOST RECENT EXPRESSION OF THIS FEELING CAME RECENTLY FROM NIGERIA AIRWAYS CHAIRMAN FRANCIS OBI, WHO IN WIDELY QUOTED STATEMENT COMPLAINED OF UNFAIR COMPETITION RESULTING FROM FACT THAT "SOME FOREIGN AIRLINES" ARE ALLOWED LANDING RIGHTS IN BOTH NIGERIA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS (KANO AND IKEJA), WHILE NIGERIA AIRWAYS NOT ALLOWED TO LAND IN MORE THAN ONE AIRPORT OF ANY FOREIGN COUNTRY.

5. PANAM, WHILE NOT A TARGET OF THIS PARTICULAR COMPLAINT, DOES BENEFIT FROM UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS FROM FMG. SOME MOT OFFICIALS WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO SEE BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT WITH U.S. HOWEVER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW NIGERIA AIRWAYS IN PRESENT CONDITION COULD SUCCESSFULLY TAKE ON SUCH A COMMITMENT, EITHER LOGISTICALLY OR FROM POINT OF VIEW OF PROFITABILITY, AND PANAM (ACCORDING TO LOCAL REP) FEELS SECURE IN PRESENT ARRANGEMENT. END COMMENT
REINHARDT

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